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A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

## MORE BORDER PATROL AGENTS NOW ACT OF 2006

Mr. ROGERS of Alabama. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 6160) to recruit and retain Border Patrol agents.

The Clerk read as follows:

H.R. 6160

*Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

### SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the "More Border Patrol Agents Now Act of 2006".

### SEC. 2. BORDER PATROL AGENT ENHANCEMENT.

(a) PLAN.—In order to address the recruitment and retention challenges faced by the United States Border Patrol, the Secretary of Homeland Security shall, not later than six months after the date of the enactment of this Act, submit to the Committee on Homeland Security and the Committee on Government Reform of the House of Representatives and the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs of the Senate a plan to determine how the Border Patrol can better recruit and retain Border Patrol agents with the appropriate skills and training to effectively carry out its mission and responsibilities.

(b) CONTENTS.—The plan shall include, at a minimum, the following components:

(1) A strategy for the utilization of the recruitment authority provided in subsection (a) of section 9702 of title 5, United States Code (as added by section 3), as well as any other strategies the Secretary determines to be important in recruiting well-qualified Border Patrol agents.

(2) A strategy for the utilization of the retention authority provided in subsection (b) of section 9702 of title 5, United States Code (as added by section 3), as well as any other strategies the Secretary determines to be important in retaining well-qualified Border Patrol agents.

(3) An assessment of the impact that current pay levels for Border Patrol agents has on the Department's ability to recruit and retain Border Patrol agents, especially in high cost-of-living areas.

(4) An assessment of whether increased opportunities for Border Patrol agents to transfer between duty stations would improve employee morale and enhance the Department's ability to recruit and retain well-qualified Border Patrol agents.

### SEC. 3. RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION BONUSES FOR BORDER PATROL AGENT ENHANCEMENT.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Chapter 97 of title 5, United States Code, is amended by adding at the end the following new section:

#### "§ 9702. Border Patrol agent enhancement"

"(a) RECRUITMENT BONUSES FOR BORDER PATROL AGENTS.—

"(1) IN GENERAL.—In order to carry out the plan described in section 2(a) of the More Border Patrol Agents Now Act of 2006, the Secretary of Homeland Security may pay a bonus to an individual to recruit a sufficient number of Border Patrol agents.

"(2) BONUS AMOUNT.—

"(A) IN GENERAL.—The amount of a bonus under this subsection shall be determined by the Secretary, but may not exceed 25 percent of the annual rate of basic pay of the position involved as of the beginning of the pe-

riod of service referred to in paragraph (3)(A).

"(B) LUMP-SUM.—A bonus under this subsection shall be paid in the form of a lump-sum payment and shall not be considered to be part of basic pay.

"(3) SERVICE AGREEMENTS.—Payment of a bonus under this section shall be contingent upon the individual entering into a written service agreement with the United States Border Patrol. The agreement shall include—

"(A) the period of service the individual shall be required to complete in return for the bonus; and

"(B) the conditions under which the agreement may be terminated before the agreed-upon service period has been completed, and the effect of such termination.

"(4) LIMITATION ON ELIGIBILITY.—A bonus under this section may not be paid to recruit an individual for—

"(A) a position to which an individual is appointed by the President, by and with the advice and consent of the Senate;

"(B) a position in the Senior Executive Service as a noncareer appointee (as defined in section 3132(a)); or

"(C) a position which has been excepted from the competitive service by reason of its confidential, policy-determining, policy-making, or policy-advocating character.

"(5) TERMINATION.—The authority to pay bonuses under this subsection shall terminate five years after the date of the enactment of this section.

"(b) RETENTION BONUSES FOR BORDER PATROL AGENTS.—

"(1) IN GENERAL.—In order to carry out the plan described in section 2(a) of the More Border Patrol Agents Now Act of 2006, the Secretary of Homeland Security may pay a retention bonus to a Border Patrol agent.

"(2) SERVICE AGREEMENT.—Payment of a bonus under this subsection is contingent upon the employee entering into a written service agreement with the United States Border Patrol to complete a period of service with the Border Patrol. Such agreement shall include—

"(A) the period of service the employee shall be required to complete in return for the bonus; and

"(B) the conditions under which the agreement may be terminated before the agreed-upon service period has been completed, and the effect of such termination.

"(3) BONUS AMOUNT.—

"(A) IN GENERAL.—The amount of a bonus under this subsection shall be determined by the Secretary, but may not exceed 25 percent of the annual rate of basic pay of the position involved as of the beginning of the period of service referred to in paragraph (2)(A).

"(B) LUMP-SUM.—A bonus under this subsection shall be paid in the form of a lump-sum payment and shall not be considered to be part of basic pay.

"(4) LIMITATION.—A bonus under this subsection may not be based on any period of service which is the basis for a recruitment bonus under subsection (a).

"(5) TERMINATION OF AUTHORITY.—The authority to grant bonuses under this subsection shall expire five years after the date of the enactment of this section.

"(c) WAIVER AUTHORITY RELATING TO REEMPLOYED ANNUITANTS.—

"(1) IN GENERAL.—In order to help address the challenges faced by the United States Border Patrol, the Secretary of Homeland Security may appoint annuitants to positions within the United States Border Patrol in accordance with succeeding provisions of this subsection.

"(2) EXCLUSION FROM OFFSET.—An annuitant serving in a position within the United

States Border Patrol pursuant to an appointment made under paragraph (1)—

"(A) shall not be subject to the provisions of section 8344 or 8468, as the case may be; and

"(B) shall not, for purposes of subchapter III of chapter 83 or chapter 84, be considered an employee.

"(3) LIMITATIONS.—

"(A) APPOINTMENTS.—The authority to make any appointments under paragraph (1) shall terminate five years after the date of the enactment of this subsection.

"(B) EXCLUSION.—The provisions of paragraph (2) shall not, in the case of any annuitant appointed under paragraph (1), remain in effect—

"(i) with respect to more than five years of service (in the aggregate); nor

"(ii) with respect to any service performed after the end of the ten-year period beginning on the date of the enactment of this subsection.

"(4) NO DISPLACEMENT.—No appointment under this subsection may be made if such appointment would result in the displacement of any Border Patrol employee.

"(5) DEFINITION.—For purposes of this subsection, the term 'annuitant' has the meaning given such term by section 8331 or 8401, as the case may be."

(b) CONFORMING AMENDMENT.—The table of contents for chapter 97 of title 5, United States Code, is amended by adding at the end the following:

"9702. Border Patrol agent enhancement."

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Alabama (Mr. ROGERS) and the gentleman from Florida (Mr. MEEK) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Alabama.

#### GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. ROGERS of Alabama. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks and insert extraneous material on the bill under consideration.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Alabama?

There was no objection.

Mr. ROGERS of Alabama. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today in strong support of H.R. 6160, the More Border Patrol Agents Now Act of 2006. This legislation will help Border Patrol put agents along our Nation's borders now, quickly and cost efficiently.

Securing our Nation's borders is an issue that ranks at the top of the list for many Americans. The President has responded by committing at least 6,000 new Border Patrol agents on our borders over the next 2 years. I wholeheartedly support this commitment, and the provisions in my bill will help us reach this goal.

Shockingly, the Border Patrol statistics show that an average of 33 applicants must be vetted before just one is hired. This means that 66,000 applicants must be screened before just 2,000 new agents are hired.

In addition, Border Patrol typically loses 700 agents annually to retirements and other law enforcement agencies. My bill addresses these personnel challenges.

First, it provides the Secretary of Homeland Security with the authority to pay recruitment and retention bonuses. Second, it allows the Border Patrol to rehire recently retired agents.

From the outset, my bill's incentives will encourage highly qualified individuals to become career Border Patrol agents; and once we make these investments to train each agent, we should also make sure these new agents are not recruited away by other law enforcement agencies. Therefore, retention bonuses are essential to maintaining a premier workforce.

My legislation also provides authority to the Secretary to rehire retired Border Patrol agents. While some agents hired recently will be able to work until age 60, current law requires most agents to retire at age 57. At a time when the American public is calling for a larger, stronger Border Patrol, it is wrong to overlook this talent pool. After all, most of these retired officers can provide cost-effective and valuable expertise almost immediately.

These officers could not only manage field operations and oversee agents, but also could serve as instructors. This provision would ensure the invaluable experience of knowledge of these retired agents is brought back to the field instead of going unused.

Mr. Speaker, I have toured the southwest border twice and visited the Border Patrol Training Academy in Artesia, New Mexico. I have heard firsthand about these personnel concerns from Border Patrol Chief David Aguilar and from the National Border Patrol Council.

This legislation has been crafted to directly and immediately address the Border Patrol's concerns. I am proud to note that the National Border Patrol Council has endorsed the legislation as well. The National Border Patrol Council president, T.J. Bonner, wrote: "The council strongly supports this legislation and urges the United States House of Representatives to enact it swiftly in order to provide the Border Patrol with some of the essential tools that it needs in order to be able to recruit and retain well-qualified individuals to help secure our borders," and I include the entire letter for the RECORD.

NATIONAL BORDER PATROL COUNCIL  
OF THE AMERICAN FEDERATION OF  
GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES,

*Campo, CA, September 25, 2006.*

Hon. MIKE ROGERS,

*Chairman, Subcommittee on Management, Integration, and Oversight, Committee on Homeland Security, House of Representatives, Washington, DC.*

DEAR CHAIRMAN ROGERS: The National Border Patrol Council appreciates your leadership on homeland security issues, and is especially grateful for your commitment to ensure that the Border Patrol has adequate staffing in order to carry out its vital border security mission. At your invitation, we recently met and discussed this issue at length. H.R. 6160, the "More Border Patrol Agents Now Act of 2006," incorporates the Council's central recommendations regarding this matter.

This legislation will enable the Border Patrol to substantially increase its ranks im-

mediately through the addition of retired employees who possess invaluable experience and knowledge. It will also assist the Border Patrol in its efforts to attract and retain well-qualified individuals by establishing recruitment and retention bonuses for them, as well as by requiring the Department of Homeland Security to develop a comprehensive plan to enhance recruitment and retention incentives.

On behalf of the nearly 11,000 front-line employees that it represents, the National Border Patrol Council expresses its gratitude to you for introducing this important bill. The Council strongly supports this legislation, and urges the United States House of Representatives to enact it swiftly in order to provide the Border Patrol with some of the essential tools that it needs to be able to recruit and retain well-qualified individuals to help secure our borders.

Sincerely,

T.J. BONNER,  
*President.*

I want to especially thank Chairman TOM DAVIS of the Government Reform Committee for his leadership on this bill. I would also like to thank Mr. ISSA for his cosponsorship and his leadership on this issue as well. I urge my colleagues to vote "yes" on H.R. 6160, the More Border Patrol Agents Now Act for 2006.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I want to commend Chairman ROGERS for both of us working together, along with the members of our subcommittee and also full committee. I think that this bill is about retention, recruitment and respect for the men and women of the U.S. Border Patrol.

Specifically, this bill will allow bonuses and recruitment and retention of the additional Border Patrol agents that are needed. Just today in committee we heard from the Department of Homeland Security Secretary, Mr. Chertoff, who talked about our SpyNet program that is now ongoing and was just awarded to the Boeing Company. We are going to need Border Patrol agents that can be on the border that can respond to what is seen on television on this recorded and tour system that they are going to put along the borders.

I think it is also important to recognize that the flexibility as it relates to this piece of legislation is going to be very, very important for us to make sure that we have enough border agents.

It would also allow the Department to rehire retired Border Patrol agents that are willing to serve their country. I think that is very, very important.

I think it is important that we have enough individuals on the border and also make sure that we take advantage of their full law enforcement capabilities.

I think it is important also to recognize that our Customs border protection officers who secure our borders and conduct inspections of people in

vehicles and cargo are also facing staffing shortages. I think if we are going to protect our borders, I think it is important we don't leave these individuals behind. But I do want to recognize the fact that I am excited and encouraged that we are moving this bill forward today, tonight, to make sure that at least we have the individuals in question funded to the level that they need to be funded, maybe higher, but making sure that we are moving towards real security here in the United States of America.

I can tell you that it has been very, very fortunate for me to work with not only the chairman but also the full committee on this piece of legislation. We have had many hearings on it. We have also had those men and women on the front line, members of our committee have gone to the front line and met with these individuals. I think it is important as we move along with the SpyNet program that we have retired members that are willing to come back and serve. And also put forth the kind of bonuses for retention and break down on attrition on border protection.

I would also like to say that when we look at national security, Mr. Speaker, I think it is important that we work in a bipartisan way. I would like to see more of this spirit as we move on, hopefully implementing the full 9/11 recommendations. This is one part of it, and moving in that direction.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. ROGERS of Alabama. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I too want to recognize and thank my colleague from Florida. He has been a real ally in this effort to make sure that our Border Patrol have the resources they need and work in a very cordial and bipartisan way. I appreciate him.

I do want to acknowledge his concern over Border Patrol officers. I share that. It is my hope that as soon as we can get this agent issue behind us that we can turn our attention to try to make sure that these officer ranks are swelled as well.

But the thing that I want to most emphasize with my colleagues in the House is that with this legislation and with our circumstance on the border and the understaffing, time is of the essence; and so I urge my colleagues to favorably consider this legislation and vote "aye."

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I yield such time as he may consume to the gentleman from the great State of Texas (Mr. AL GREEN).

Mr. AL GREEN of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I thank the chairman, Chairman ROGERS, and Congressman MEEK.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to paraphrase the great Frederick Douglass, who reminded us that we may not get all that we have worked for; however, we will work for all that we get.

Clearly, we have worked to get more Border Patrol agents. It is important

that we do so. At the rate of 33 to 1, 66,000 before we can get 2,000, it will take a considerable amount of time to get the number of agents needed. So we should work and we have worked for more Border Patrol agents.

However, the record should also reflect, Mr. Speaker, that we have worked for more Customs and border protection officers. They are the people that inspect people as well as cargo at ports of entry. They are the persons who caught the Millennium Bomber. They need help, too. I thank the chairman for his indication that we will move in that direction.

This bill is not all that we have worked for, but it is all that we can get right now, and I urge my colleagues to support the bill. I thank the chairman and Congressman MEEK.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I want to respond to the chairman by saying I appreciate his recognition of our Customs border protection officers and their need of being able to be a part of something good and something in protecting America.

I think that it is important that not only on the minority side but on the majority side we make a commitment to these very fine men and women. They put their lives on the line every day serving our country. These are individuals that are conducting inspections of people, vehicles, and cargo. As long as we hold them in our heart and also in our mind, as we move forward from this point on, I think it will protect America even further.

I join Mr. GREEN and also Mr. ROGERS in encouraging all of our Members to vote in the affirmative in making sure that we pass this very important piece of legislation.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. ROGERS of Alabama. Mr. Speaker, I yield such time as he may consume to the gentleman from Indiana (Mr. SOUDER).

Mr. SOUDER. Mr. Speaker, I thank the chairman for his leadership and the ranking minority member. It is clear that we have had the goal for adding Border Patrol agents for some time in this Congress.

A number of years ago when the Homeland Security Committee was first being created and we were looking at how better to protect our border, it became apparent that as we went to air marshals, we had more people leaving the Border Patrol than we could hire. When we were hiring into the Border Patrol, we were pulling them out of State and local police, and then they would move over to other agencies.

Unless we take special efforts in this Congress to do more to retain our Border Patrol and pay additional money to them, we are not going to be able to meet the hypothetical goals that we have set for ourselves.

When we debated about fencing on the border, we heard that we need to

have more Border Patrol. We have had difficulty holding the Border Patrol we have and meeting the numbers of our current assessments which would only put us to a fraction of actually controlling the border.

That is why in the House, and most on our side at least support border fencing and virtual fencing, but we also support dramatic increases in the number of Border Patrol and changing and making adaptations in their pay scales and in their retention because without that, we will not have adequate Border Patrol.

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So I thank the chairman for his leadership with this because this is an important part of a comprehensive border strategy for the people who are on the ground who have in many cases jobs where they sit there for long periods of time, where they may or may not see somebody coming in through the southern border in particular in very hot environments, and to retain somebody in that job requires additional assistance. And I am glad to see that we are authorizing that, that we are starting to move ahead, because this is one of the most critical steps, along with the fencing, in controlling the Southwest border.

Mr. ROGERS of Alabama. Mr. Speaker, I yield such time as she may consume to the gentlewoman from Texas, Ms. SHEILA JACKSON-LEE.

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I thank Chairman ROGERS and Ranking Member MEEK both for their leadership.

This has been a committee that has found common ground in many instances, and certainly I rise to support the More Border Patrol Agents Now Act of 2006, which would help develop a plan that would give us a long-term opportunity to plan over the years for recruitment of our Border Patrol agents.

Let me tell you what else I think is needed that I hope will be included in our long-range plan, an affirmation of the Border Patrol agents, of the value of their work, the necessity of their work. Certainly we know that there have been some ups and downs. Right now, we are confronting an issue in Texas about the prosecution of Border Patrol agents and whether the facts were in order, but I think it is important that they know the rules, they have professional development, and as well there is a definitive way to recruit. But let me say to you that I hope that as we move toward legislation that addresses the question of Border Patrol agents, we will address the question of professional development, their civil service status.

And I would commend to you H.R. 4044, legislation that I wrote, that I had the endorsement of the National Border Patrol Council. Mr. T.J. Bonner is president, who is seeking to ensure that there is a civil service protection for Border Patrol agents and there is a certain elevation of their level that

speaks to their compensation. So that has to be a part of the package of recruitment as well. And, of course, advancement, salary increases, these are real, hard-core issues that will help retain those that we hire.

Lastly, let me say that, in addition, we do want to ensure that they have the equipment; and I know we have had a series of amendments taken from H.R. 4044, the leadership of Mr. THOMPSON and the full committee for body armor and special weapons and night vision and computers. We have to give them the equipment that they need to ensure that they can do the job. And I know, as I see Mr. ROGERS and my good friend, the ranking member, I see the word "accountability," not wasting dollars and making sure that we go in the right direction in terms of expending these dollars for our Border Patrol so that we make sure that we are an efficient department. I want to do that, too.

I close on this note: The question is always asked whether or not we are safer today than we were 5 years ago. Certainly what is missing is we have not kept up with the 9/11 Commission report in providing Border Patrol agents in the numbers that we should have provided. Certainly any statement that we make today on the floor that commends Border Patrol agents and thanks them but also talks about having more of them is a step in the right direction. And I would only ask my colleagues to realize that in being safe at home, we have to confront the issues dealing with our conflict in Iraq.

But I do rise to support this legislation. I thank the gentleman for yielding, and I ask my colleagues to support the More Border Patrol Agents Now Act of 2006. And I thank the distinguished gentleman from Florida and the full committee.

I rise in support of the More Border Patrol Agents Now Act of 2006, H.R. 6160. The More Border Patrol Agents Now Act would require the Homeland Security Secretary to develop a plan to determine how the Border Patrol can better recruit and retain Border Patrol agents. It also would establish bonuses for agents who agree to serve for a specified period of time. In addition, it would waive the offset that reemployed annuitants currently have to pay if they return to government service after retirement. The authority to provide these incentives would terminate five years after the enactment of H.R. 6160.

I agree that we should require the Homeland Security Secretary to develop a plan to determine how the Border Patrol can better recruit and retain Border Patrol agents. I also agree that we should authorize the incentives. But much more is needed to deal effectively with the retention and recruitment issues of the Border Patrol.

We also need to provide the Border Patrol with the equipment and resources they need to secure the border. I have introduced a bill that would provide the Border Patrol with the equipment and resources they need, the Rapid Response Border Protection Act of 2005, H.R. 4044.

H.R. 4044 would add 15,000 Border Patrol agents over the next five years, increasing the

number of agents from 11,000 to 26,000. With more than 8,000 miles of land and coastal borders to patrol continuously, it is evident that this increase is desperately needed, particularly if they are to be able to respond in sufficient numbers when heavily armed smugglers are encountered. H.R. 4044 also has provisions for body armor, special weapons, and night vision equipment.

H.R. 4044 is strongly endorsed by the National Border Patrol Council and the National Homeland Security Council, organizations that represent the front-line employees who enforce our immigration and customs laws.

I have said often that a piecemeal approach to immigration reform will not work. We need comprehensive immigration reform that will fix our broken immigration system, such as would be provided by my Save America Comprehensive Immigration Act, H.R. 2092. But even a good immigration system will not stop drug smugglers from crossing our borders illegally. For that, we need a Border Patrol with enough agents to patrol the entire border effectively, and they have to have the weapons and other equipment that is necessary for confrontations with heavily armed drug smugglers and the other dangerous criminals who cross the border illegally.

Nevertheless, the More Border Patrol Agents Now Act is a step in the right direction. I urge you to vote for it.

Mr. ROGERS of Alabama. Mr. Speaker, I would like to close by once again thanking Ranking Member MEEK for his support and hard work; and I urge my colleagues to vote "aye" on H.R. 6160.

Mr. ISSA. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of H.R. 6160, the More Border Patrol Agents Now Act of 2006.

This legislation takes an important step toward making our borders more secure and our country safer. More agents along our Nation's borders will lead to better enforcement of our immigration laws. The President's commitment of 6,000 more Border Patrol agents in the next two years is a good start to enhancing border security, but if these agents cannot be easily hired, or if current Border Patrol agents are lost to other employment, this enhanced security cannot be maintained.

Personnel concerns should not be a factor limiting the effectiveness of the Border Patrol.

H.R. 6160 addresses some of these concerns. By streamlining the hiring process and offering recruitment and retention bonuses, H.R. 6160 takes steps to ensure that the Border Patrol will be an effective first line of defense at our borders.

Numerous times, I have met with Border Patrol agents in and around my district in Southern California. On several occasions, the issue of the age limit for new hires has been brought up. Currently, the Border Patrol is covered under law enforcement retirement provisions, meaning new hires must be under the age of 40, unless they presently serve or have previously served in a position covered by federal civilian law enforcement retirement. This precludes retired members of our armed forces from employment by the Border Patrol if they are 40 years of age or older. Because of this arbitrary provision, the Border Patrol is unable to hire extremely qualified individuals, many of whom would need little further training to be effective Border Patrol agents. It is my hope that Congress will address the age

limit issue so even more qualified agents can be hired.

I want to thank Mr. ROGERS for his leadership on this issue. I would also like to thank Chairmen KING and DAVIS and both the Homeland Security and Government Reform Committees for responding to the needs of the Border Patrol Agency so it can better secure our Nation's borders.

Mr. THOMPSON of Mississippi. Mr. Speaker, the Administration requested that the Border Patrol increase its ranks by 6,000 more agents by 2008. This Congress has failed to act to meet this goal.

This bill is a good start towards ensuring we at least provide better salaries to the Border Patrol agents we already have.

But this bill only addresses part of the border security equation. It fails to address the other half—Customs and Border Protection Officers.

Mr. Speaker, we have heard that the Border Patrol and the Customs and Border Protection Officer Corps both face recruitment and retention problems.

As we know, the Border Patrol agents guard our borders, which is a tough job. But this bill overlooks the demanding and dangerous job that Customs and Border Protection Officers perform when they inspect cargo and people entering the United States at the various Ports of Entry. Both of these jobs are an important part of efforts to protect our borders, and the people doing these jobs should be justly compensated.

The only way we can address these employment issues is by exploring all options available to this Congress and the Department through the legislative and oversight process, not simply relying on an election year gimmick of passing a bill that will not likely be acted on by the Senate nor enacted into law.

A meaningful full-step forward would be having a hearing on this bill and requesting all of the stakeholders to come and testify before our Committee on how to address the employment problems in the Customs and Border Protection Directorate.

Mr. Speaker, I will support this bill because I know this is a good step towards fully securing our country. But, we will only be making real progress when we hire enough Border Patrol agents and Customs and Border Protection Officers and make sure both these groups are better paid and equipped.

Mr. WAXMAN. Mr. Speaker, border security is an issue of great concern to all Americans. It deserves serious deliberation and congressional consideration. Unfortunately, the bill before us now, H.R. 6160, the More Border Patrol Agents Now Act, was introduced yesterday and is being considered on the floor today without benefit of committee action by either the Homeland Security or Government Reform Committee.

H.R. 6160 would grant the Department of Homeland Security the ability to award Border Patrol agents lump-sum recruitment and retention bonuses of up to 25 percent of annual pay. It would also allow the Department to re-hire retirees. The Department can already do this under current Governmentwide authorities as long as it works with the Office of Personnel Management, OPM, the agency which best understands hiring needs.

Giving the Department this direct authority to circumvent OPM may or may not be a good idea. Appropriate action by the committees of

jurisdiction would have allowed us to determine whether or not this independent authority is needed.

In short, we should not view this bill as a magic bullet to cure the ills of the Border Patrol. The Director of the OPM already has the authority to authorize the head of an agency to pay these bonuses. So the only real effect of this measure will be to cut the Federal agency with the most expertise in Federal personnel issues out of the decisionmaking process with regard to the Border Patrol.

Mr. ROGERS of Alabama. Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Alabama (Mr. ROGERS) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 6160.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds having voted in favor thereof) the rules were suspended and the bill was passed.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

#### EXPRESSING THE SENSE OF THE HOUSE THAT THE BORDER PATROL IS PERFORMING AN INVALUABLE SERVICE

Mr. ROGERS of Alabama. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and agree to the resolution (H. Res. 1030) expressing the sense of the House of Representatives that the United States Border Patrol is performing an invaluable service to the United States, and that the House of Representatives fully supports the more than 12,000 Border Patrol agents.

The Clerk read as follows:

#### H. RES. 1030

Whereas Border Patrol agents are a highly trained and qualified group of men and women;

Whereas Border Patrol agents protect the United States from an influx of illegal immigration, illicit drugs, counterfeit goods, and terrorists;

Whereas Border Patrol agents protect our borders in some of the most remote and dangerous areas of the country; and

Whereas Border Patrol agents continue to perform their duties under tough circumstances: Now, therefore, be it

*Resolved*, That it is the sense of the House of Representatives that the men and women of the United States Border Patrol should be supported for their dedication to the United States and to their mission to secure our borders.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Alabama (Mr. ROGERS) and the gentlewoman from California (Ms. LORETTA SANCHEZ) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Alabama.

#### GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. ROGERS of Alabama. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks on this legislation and insert extraneous material on the bill.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Alabama?